



U.S. Customs and  
Border Protection

# Press Release

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## **KNOW BEFORE YOU GO**

### ***Tips For U.S. Citizens and Permanent Residents Traveling Internationally***

Washington, D.C.—U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) today launched a traveler awareness campaign to inform the millions of Americans and U.S. residents who will travel abroad this holiday season.

"U.S. Customs and Border Protection is committed to making sure that your vacation and business travel is as safe and stress free as possible," stated Commissioner Robert C. Bonner. "U.S. citizens vacationing abroad can make their own travel easier by taking a few extra minutes to 'Know Before You Go.'"

"Travelers should also be aware," Commissioner Bonner continued, "that the United States and its citizens are targets for terrorists. While CBP is taking every necessary step to protect our country, employing a highly trained work force with the latest technology, we need an alert and vigilant citizenry to report to enforcement authorities any unusual or suspicious activity. We ask you to be our partners in ensuring a safe, secure and enjoyable holiday season."

To learn about the rules for bringing back purchases made and gifts received abroad, travelers should read *Know Before You Go*, available at [www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/](http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/travel/).

Here is a brief overview of U.S. Customs and Border Protection requirements.

- If you are a U.S. citizen returning to the United States from outside of the Western Hemisphere, e.g., Europe, Asia, Africa, or Australia, you must present a valid passport. If you are a U.S. citizen traveling inside the Western Hemisphere, e.g., North, Central or South America, it is highly recommended that you carry any proof of citizenship that clearly establishes identity and nationality, such as a passport (valid or expired), a Certificate of Citizenship or Certificate of Naturalization, or a birth certificate or baptismal certificate and a photo I.D.
- If you are a non-citizen who is a lawful permanent resident of the United States, you must present a permanent resident card ("green card," Form I-551), a reentry permit, or a refugee travel document endorsed to reflect permanent resident status.

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- If you are in the process of applying for lawful permanent residence in the United States, you must file Form I-131, Application for Travel Document, and receive permission to travel outside the United States, BEFORE leaving the United States (advance parole).
- You must declare the total value of all articles acquired abroad and in your possession at the time you return. This includes articles you bought; gifts you received; repairs, or alterations made while you were out of the United States; and any items you brought home for someone else.
- If you have food items or souvenirs made of straw or other plant-derived materials or seeds, you must declare them on the CBP declaration form. Here's why: certain items brought into this country from foreign countries may harbor foreign animal and plant pests and diseases that could seriously damage America's crops, livestock, pets, and the environment. All meats, fruits, vegetables, plants, animals, and plant and animal products, soup or soup products in your possession must be declared and presented for inspection. This declaration must cover all items carried in checked baggage and carry-on luggage. If the items are found to have pests or be diseased, or are from an area where certain diseases are occurring, they will be seized and destroyed under government supervision. Travelers who fail to declare plant and animal products can be fined up to \$1,000 or more and have their items confiscated. You should also declare if you have been on a farm or in close proximity to livestock. If you have, we will want to examine your shoes for dirt or animal matter that could harbor foot-and-mouth disease or other dangers to U.S. livestock.
- Your duty-free exemption is \$800 if you are a returning U.S. resident and the items you acquired abroad accompany you. The duty-free exemption is \$600 if you are returning directly from a Caribbean Basin Economic Recovery Act country. The exemption is \$1,200 if you are returning from American Samoa, Guam, or the U.S. Virgin Islands.
- Gifts you mailed from abroad to people in the United States can be received by them free of duty if the value of the gift does not exceed \$100.
- The articles you purchased in "duty-free" shops, or on a plane or ship, are subject to duty and other restrictions. Articles you bought in American duty-free shops are subject to duty and IRS tax if reentered into the United States.
- There is no limitation on the amount of monetary instruments that may be brought into or taken out of the United States. If you take out or bring in more than \$10,000 in currency or negotiable instruments you must file a report (FinCen 105) with CBP.

This is only a brief overview of U.S. Customs and Border Protection requirements. The brochure, *Know Before You Go*, describes the rules in detail. A copy of this brochure can be ordered on CBP's web site at <http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/toolbox/publications/order/>. You may also call and request a copy from U.S. Customs and Border Protection in Washington, D.C., at 1.877.CBP.5511 or 202.354.1000.

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*U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control, and protection of our Nation's borders at and between the official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.*